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## FROM PEOPLE'S LIBERATION WAR AND REVOLUTION TO ANTIFASCIST STRUGGLE

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The topic of this work is the treatment of antifascism in Croatian (and, up to 1990, Yugoslav) historiography. The term antifascism was inaugurated on the eve of the Second World War by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) based on guidelines from the Communist International. During the Second World War, the KPJ managed to seize power and restore Yugoslavia thanks to its practical application of antifascism. After the war, antifascism was entirely ignored, and the war was interpreted exclusively as a people's liberation struggle and socialist revolution. Public use of the term antifascism returned during the collapse of communism and the disintegration of Yugoslavia from 1990 to 1992. Moving away from the structures associated with the former ruling communist elite (members of the Communist Party and Partisan war veterans), antifascism imposed itself as a component of democratic ideology that could not be subjected to scrutiny, rather it had to be unquestioningly accepted. Historical antifascism served the communists to exploit non-communists to then seize authority, while contemporary “antifascism” serves their direct and ideological heirs to prevent a re-examination of communist crimes and the undemocratic character of socialist Yugoslavia.

**Key words:** historiography, antifascism, socialist revolution, Croatia, Yugoslavia

In the very simplest terms, historical antifascism is the negation of fascism by democrats and communists. The history of antifascism in Croatia began in the latter half of the 1930s and it is inextricably tied to the history of

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the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), later the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ). The history of antifascism in Croatia can be divided into four chronological phases. The first was in the period just ahead of the Second World War, the second during that war, the third in socialist Yugoslavia, and the fourth in modern Croatia. The first two phases were directly linked to historical antifascism, while the third and fourth are interpretations of the first two, the former during the era of communism, and the second during post-communism/democracy. Even though the interpreters of antifascism have the same political roots, their interpretations are entirely different. The fourth phase is still ongoing, and it may be rendered in scare-quotes, i.e., as “antifascism”, because it is politically and ideologically motivated and based on a distortion of the essence of historical antifascism.

## Antifascism between the World Wars

The end of the First World War was marked by the emergence of a communist regime that reinforced its power in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991), a country that until the communist victory was the Russian Empire. The seizure of authority by the communists in the largest country in the world also signified the beginning of totalitarianism. The other two totalitarian movements appeared on the political right, fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany, due to disenchantment with democracy and as a response to communist attempts to seize power in Central and Eastern European countries by revolutionary means. The term fascism became established for such movements because the Italian fascists seized power in that country a decade before the Nazis did the same in Germany. Both fascism and communism shared an opposition to the civic state (representative democracy). Given that these political ideologies are now interpreted from the current point of view, it is often forgotten that both offered hope for a better future to many. The difference is that fascism offered this hope to a single polity or nation, while communism sent a universal message of the equality of many and thus exerted greater attraction.<sup>1</sup> Until September 1939 and the onset of the Second World War, the leading liberal democracies, France and Great Britain, deemed fascism a lesser evil than communism, which was logical given the terrorist character of the communist umbrella organization, the Communist International, or Comintern (1919-1943), which had its headquarters in Moscow.<sup>2</sup> The Comintern gave communism the significance of an organized world global movement aimed at assuming power wherever it could by revolutionary means (through the “class struggle” strategy). Attempts to spread communism throughout Europe from 1919 through 1923 by revolution failed, and as a result the Com-

<sup>1</sup> François Furet, *Prošlost jedne iluzije: Ogled o komunističkoj ideji u XX. stoljeću* (Zagreb, 1997), pp. 10-14. The cited pages are from the author's foreword to the Croatian edition.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Johnson, *Moderna vremena* (Zagreb, 2007), pp. 368-369.

munist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) became the leading communist organization and Moscow became the centre of communism, upon which all other communists were directly dependent as sections of the Comintern. The communists blamed their revolutionary defeats on the social democrats, who favoured a parliamentary approach. They equated the latter with fascists, i.e., they proclaimed them a component of the bourgeoisie and reaction. Thanks to their rejection of and intolerance toward the social democrats, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler rose to power democratically in Germany and then eliminated the German Communist Party.<sup>3</sup>

Hitler's victory forced communist leader Joseph Stalin to alter the policy toward liberal democracy in order to protect the USSR from potential attacks by Germany. In 1935, Stalin replaced the "class struggle" strategy with the anti-fascist front strategy, and "antifascism" became the "new earthly manifestation of the communist idea".<sup>4</sup> This shift did not signify a change in the strategic objective of communism, it simply acquired a new legitimacy with antifascism that allowed it to join the democratic coalition and create the pretence of a worldwide division between fascists and antifascists. At the same time, terror was being implemented in the USSR with major court trials. Antifascism was advocated from 1935 to 1939, which manifested itself in a popular front that achieved considerable success in France and somewhat in Spain during the civil war.<sup>5</sup> In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Comintern's antifascism was propagated by the illegal KPJ, whose public reach was rather modest. This is even acknowledged by apologists of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, accusing bourgeois parties of opposing cooperation with the communists more than falling prey to their tactics.<sup>6</sup> A key contribution to this failure was made by the USSR when it concluded a pact with Germany, which also signified the end of the antifascist popular front strategy. This circumstance should not be excluded when seeking an answer to the question of why the KPJ did not begin using the term antifascism until the end of 1942, while the concept of a popular front was only activated at near the end of the war.

## Antifascism in the Second World War

In April 1941, the Axis powers attacked and occupied the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Fascism came to power in the territory of the partitioned state, either

<sup>3</sup> Gordana Vlajčić, *Boljševički antifašizam* (Zagreb, 2005), pp. 85, 87; *Povijest: Prvi svjetski rat i poslijeratna Europa (1914.-1936.)* (Zagreb, 2008), book 16, pp. 592-593.

<sup>4</sup> F. Furet, *Prošlost jedne iluzije*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15, 218-220, 225-269.

<sup>6</sup> Aleksandar Petković, "Savez socijalističkog radnog naroda Jugoslavije", *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, knjiga 7 (Zagreb, 1968), p. 415; Dušan Živković, *Narodni front Jugoslavije 1935-1945* (Belgrade, 1978), pp. 100-103.

through direct annexation of individual parts thereof to Italy and Germany, or through the establishment of quasi-fascist puppet regimes such as those of Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and of General Milan Nedić in Serbia. The primary political parties from the pre-war unified opposition, such as the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) and the Democratic Party either disintegrated or were banned. In Croatia, the HSS peacefully relinquished authority to the Ustasha, and a part of its membership even joined them, while others did not. The party's top leadership, however, withdrew from public life and awaited the end of the war. This passive stance was unfair to its members, who were subjected to the vicissitudes of the war and particularly threatened in the territories annexed by Italy or located within the Italian sphere of interest in the NDH. Their refusal to cooperate with the newly established fascist regimes placed them among the opponents of fascism. The KPJ was still outlawed, although as a Soviet exponent the Germans did not persecute them until their attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941. Prior to the German attack on the USSR, it is difficult to speak of any sort of organized form of resistance, including the group of officers from the former Royal Yugoslav Army who arrived in Ravna Gora, Serbia under the leadership of Col. Dragoljub Mihailović.<sup>7</sup> Allegedly the Anti-imperialist Front was proclaimed in Slovenia in utter illegality on 27 April 1941, which at the time of the German attack on the Soviet Union was renamed the Liberation Front.<sup>8</sup>

The first armed resistance against the fascists and some of their puppet regimes was mounted in June 1941 by Serbian insurgents in eastern Herzegovina. Their uprising against the NDH was more a movement of the threatened Serbian masses rather than a result of communist efforts as claimed after the war.<sup>9</sup> As a branch of the Comintern, the KPJ launched an uprising on 22 June at Stalin's behest after several days of preparations and alleviation of the damages caused by arrests of their members.<sup>10</sup> In its initial phase, the communist uprising did not invoke the antifascism practiced until 1939 due to their fanatical belief in the might of the Red Army, which can almost be compared to religious zealotry. The communists did not consider the uprising a precarious adventure but rather a simple and rapid task that was supposed to be completed by the Red Army.<sup>11</sup> To their dismay, the Red Army did not come, so the communists had no choice but to attempt to find allies among the civic parties based on the rejected principles of the popular front. An attempt to

<sup>7</sup> Jozo Tomasevich, *Četnici u drugom svjetskom ratu 1941-1945* (Zagreb, 1979), pp. 118-120.

<sup>8</sup> Pero Morača, *Jugoslavija 1941* (Belgrade, 1971), pp. 114-115, 362-363.

<sup>9</sup> Davor Marijan, "Lipanski ustanak u istočnoj Hercegovini 1941. godine", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 35 (2003), no. 2: 572-573.

<sup>10</sup> Davor Marijan, "Majsko savjetovanje CK KPJ – kamen temeljac u zidu obmana", *HEREDITAS rerum Croaticarum adhonorem Mirko Valentić* (Zagreb, 2003), pp. 328-329.

<sup>11</sup> Milovan Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat* (Belgrade, 1990), pp. 37-38; Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svjetskom ratu 1939-1945* (Belgrade, 1992), pp. 129-130, 157-158, 210.

form an alliance with Mihailović's Chetniks failed, although it is not entirely clear which side had violated their signed agreement: the communists who engaged in the struggle regardless of the repercussions or the Chetniks, who took Serbian casualties into account.<sup>12</sup> One can only speak of organized cooperation between communists and non-communists as of the summer of 1942, after the communist debacle with its class struggle (the "red terror" or "leftist errors") in Montenegro and eastern Herzegovina. The KPJ leadership realized that the war's end was not in sight and that they had to alter their strategy. Given the communist worldview, I cannot agree with the assertion that their cooperation with non-communists was an "unusual alliance" in global terms as historian Branko Petranović alleged, but rather an entirely unnatural alliance.<sup>13</sup> In Yugoslavia, and in certain other European countries, this was cooperation between non-communists and their executioners, who postponed their execution until the period after victory.

Due to the passivity of the pre-war political parties, the Italian terror against the Croats in the Littoral and the Ustasha terror against the Serbs, there was a sufficient number of desperate people conducive for exploitation by the communists to take control when the Red Army, against their expectations, did not already do so in 1941. The symbol of these forlorn people left to their fate were the Croats from Dalmatia, who in the summer of 1942 filled the exhausted and thinned ranks of the Partisan proletarian and shock brigades which had arrived in south-west Bosnia from eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, injecting them with some essential fresh blood and a stimulus for continuing their struggle.<sup>14</sup> They were actually the wave of genuine fighters against fascism which the Ustasha regime had left to the mercy of the Italians under the Treaties of Rome. A sustainable assertion, made in 1996 to be sure, was that in Croatia "it was not only a matter of rhetorical antifascism but rather a movement whose internal historical logic is difficult to dispute. For example, in Dalmatia and Istria, antifascism was transformed into resistance against the Italian occupiers and spontaneous dissatisfaction with the Ustasha regime because it so casually assented to the amputation of the Adriatic coast".<sup>15</sup> The motives for war nurtured by the Serbs from Croatia were far more prosaic. Stated simply, they became divided between Chetniks and Partisans. Both had a common objective: to struggle against the Ustasha regime and an independent Croatian state. To a considerable extent, antifascism gave them an acceptable framework to oppose any Croatian state, and it constituted a continuation of Serbian poli-

<sup>12</sup> B. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, pp. 210-212, 262-268.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>14</sup> *Dalmatinci u Prvoj proleterskoj brigadi* (Split, 1982), pp. 29-31; Davor Marijan, *Borbe za Kupres 1942*. (Zagreb, 1999), p. 175.

<sup>15</sup> Nada Kisić Kolanović, *Andrija Hebrang [1899-1949]: iluzije i otrežnjenja* (Zagreb, 1996), p. 81.

cies from the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which aspired to take Croatian territory and negated any distinct Croatian nationhood.<sup>16</sup>

In practice, the communists reduced antifascism to the struggle against fascists and “domestic traitors” as they called those who were allied with Germany and Italy. Thanks to the fact that they were outlawed before the war, the communists had an unsurpassable organizational advantage and a well-oiled propaganda machine which came to the fore in the resistance movement, and they were in a position to specify who was a fascist and who was an antifascist. The Party's Central Committee did not concern itself greatly with the theoretical explanations of antifascism, rather it concentrated on propagating freedom and a better future, which was more suited to a country with an enormous number of illiterate inhabitants. The formula was clear and concise: the struggle against fascists is what relegated the antifascist to an individual prepared to take up arms in the struggle against fascists and their domestic collaborators and thereby create the conditions for the proclamation of a communist dictatorship when the time was right. The war was reduced to a simple dichotomy of good vs. evil, in which the antifascists were good and the fascists evil. The preferred term was people's liberation movement, or the people's liberation struggle, from which the names of their military organizations were derived: the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and Partisan Detachments (the NOV and PO). The term antifascism was used more rarely, and particularly not on its own, but rather almost exclusively for non-Party mass organizations: the Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and its regional branches (for example, the Territorial Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Croatia – ZAVNOH), the Antifascist Women's Front (AFŽ) and the United Antifascist Youth Alliance of Yugoslavia (USAOJ). In essence, this was a repetition of the tried-and-tested communist formula of creating outside of the Party but binding to it “organizational units that will, without formal subordination, be led wherever” the Party “wants to take them”.<sup>17</sup> These organizations were exploited to assume power and to provide support to the military organization. The purpose of the AFŽ and USAOJ was to support the people's liberation committees and to provide logistical or rear-guard support to the Partisan struggle, which was also denoted in the Resolution on the Establishment of the AVNOJ on 27 November 1942.<sup>18</sup>

The minimal use of antifascism is well-illustrated by two similar informative articles by distinguished KPJ member Edvard Kardelj, written in 1944 for read-

<sup>16</sup> Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.-1945.* (Zagreb, 1996), p. 13; Cf. Ivan Rogić, *Tehnika i samostalnost: okvir za sliku treće hrvatske modernizacije* (Zagreb, 2000), p. 424; Ljubomir Antić, *Velikosrpski nacionalni programi: Ishodišta i posljedice* (Zagreb, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> *Komunistička stranka: Nacrt razvoja i ustrojstva* (Zagreb, 1944), pp. 112-113. The brochure (manual) has been attributed to Ante Ciliga, Tijas Mortigijija and Mirko Kus-Nikolajev.

<sup>18</sup> Slobodan Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1973), pp. 6-11: Rezolucija o osnivanju AVNOJ-a od 27. 11. 1942.



ers abroad, in which the communists presented what they were fighting for and what they expected in the future, i.e., how they envisioned Yugoslavia's future. Both articles were written in the people's liberation tone and only in "Toward a new Yugoslavia" is antifascism mentioned at a place where the KPJ is portrayed as the sole general Yugoslav party with a consistent antifascist stance. Given its objective and the manner in which it was written, there were many places at which antifascism could have been mentioned but was not. The exception was, of course, the abbreviation AVNOJ.<sup>19</sup> The closest to some form of theoretical delineation of wartime antifascism is contained in articles published in the bulletin *Proleter* in December 1942, which was also the final printed issue. In an article on the relationship between the AVNOJ and the KPJ, Moša Pijade stated that the KPJ "immediately set [the struggle] on the broadest possible base, as a patriotic, antifascist struggle of all sincere patriots regardless of nationality, faith and political convictions", which was of course untrue, and that the KPJ "did not set forth from some narrow parochial interests, because a genuine people's Party like ours cannot have any of its own interests which would not correspond to the interests of the broadest masses of the people".<sup>20</sup>

Power and its seizure was the primary objective of the KPJ, and Tito oriented all activity in this regard, which is what led to the conflict with the policies of the USSR as conducted by the Communist International. The seizure of authority, meaning the implementation of Bolshevik revolution, was opposed by the Comintern because of the USSR's unfavourable position from 1941 to 1943 and the efforts to refrain from provoking its Western allies too much through local revolutionary undertakings. By the autumn of 1942, Tito had twice planned to establish a political body which was supposed to be proclaimed a government.<sup>21</sup> On 20 November 1942 he summoned the persons with whom he intended to establish the People's Liberation Council and the Council of People's Commissioners, which were supposed to form the highest people's authority in Yugoslavia, to come to Bihać.<sup>22</sup> Previously, on 12 November, he notified the Comintern that "we are now forming something like a government, and it will be called the National Committee of Yugoslavia's Liberation".<sup>23</sup> The Comintern blocked Tito's plan on 19 November 1942, in-

<sup>19</sup> Edvard Kardelj-Bevc, *1. Put nove Jugoslavije – 2. Dva puta malih naroda jugoistočne Evrope*, 1944. The brochure has no indicia for a publisher or place of publication, rather only the slogan "Death to fascism – freedom to the people!"

<sup>20</sup> Moša Pijade, "Antifašističko veće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije i komunistička partija", *Proleter: Organ Centralnog komiteta Komunističke partije Jugoslavije 1929-1942* (Belgrade, 1968), pp. 826-829.

<sup>21</sup> Branko Petranović, *AVNOJ – revolucionarna smena vlasti 1942-1945* (Belgrade, 1976), pp. 82-83.

<sup>22</sup> Slobodan Nešović, "Dokument o prvoj zamisli sazivanja bihačkog skupa i međunarodni aspekt priprema Prvog zasjedanja AVNOJ-a", *AVNOJ i narodnooslobodilačka borba u Bosni i Hercegovini (1942-1943)* (Belgrade, 1974), pp. 407-423.

<sup>23</sup> *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije (SSSR) 1941-1945: dokumenti i materijali* (Belgrade, 1996), pp. 246-247; Radiogram generalnog sekretara KPJ od 12. 11. 1942. za Izvršni komitet Kominterne.



sisting on a more peaceful and sober approach, seeking that higher interests be taken into account, and these were the interests of the USSR. Instead of proclaiming a government, it sought the formation of a political body for the people's liberation struggle that should not oppose the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London. It insisted that the planned committee be given a general national, Yugoslav, all-party and antifascist character.<sup>24</sup> In simplified terms, this meant a broad alliance of non-communists in order to defeat fascism and then assume authority. According to Serbian historian Branko Petranović, the KPJ acknowledged the Comintern's directive but then practically continued its "struggle to replace the government in the course of the entire war within the framework of its people's liberation struggle strategy".<sup>25</sup> It may therefore be said that Tito accepted the term antifascism at the insistence of the Comintern, or rather Georgi Dimitrov, and that the assessment made by Serbian historian Milorad Ekmečić, that the key role in the creation of socialist Yugoslavia was played by Stalin, who corrected Tito's hasty errors and led him "step-by-step" toward their objective, is largely valid.<sup>26</sup> Petranović said of this: "By highlighting this antifascist feature of the 'Council', greater emphasis was placed on the temporary, political and combative character of this new body as the expression of the Comintern's constant fear of worsening the Soviet status among the Allies and of accusations that the USSR was making changes to the state and social order in Yugoslavia by revolutionary means".<sup>27</sup> Thus, a pre-war phrase with which Stalin seemed to have dispensed when he signed a pact with Germany in 1939 once more gained currency.

The first session of AVNOJ held in Bihać in 1942, regardless of subsequent interpretations, did not fulfil its purpose, i.e., it did not propel the communists to power, but it did signal to the legitimate representatives of Yugoslavia residing abroad that there was a relatively strong military option in the actual theatre of war that intended to assume authority. The public was notified that the AVNOJ had been established, and it issued a proclamation to the "peoples of Yugoslavia" summoning them "to arms, to the great liberation war against the occupiers for freedom and the fraternal union of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia". The proclamation indicated that the purpose was to fight against the old state apparatus, and the conduct of the leaders of the pre-war political parties was condemned.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 254-255: Radiogram generalnog sekretara IK Kominterne od 19. 11. 1942. za generalnog sekretara KPJ.

<sup>25</sup> B. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> Milorad Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja: Istorija Srba u Novom veku (1492-1992)* (Belgrade, 2008), p. 477.

<sup>27</sup> B. Petranović, *AVNOJ – revolucionarna smena vlasti 1942-1945*, p. 121.

<sup>28</sup> S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*, 14-18: Proglas AVNOJ-a narodima Jugoslavije od 27. 11. 1942.

The principal “legislator” of the KPJ Central Committee, Moša Pijade, defined AVNOJ as the political organ and general national and general-party political representative of the people’s liberation struggle in Yugoslavia, which had to “unify to the utmost all patriotic antifascist forces of all peoples and all social classes in Yugoslavia”.<sup>29</sup> Milovan Đilas, a member of the KPJ Central Committee’s Politburo, testified that the First Session of AVNOJ was

“Tito’s in everything: in terms of both ideas and decisions. This does not mean that there were differences in the Central Committee – except that to me the name AVNOJ appeared clumsy. But that was why my ‘leftist’ orientation was satisfied by the term ‘council’, since that was the translation of the Russian word ‘soviet’, which they could not have known, neither then nor later.

“The views initiated by Tito, and in whose formulation – if I recall correctly – [Sreten] Žujović participated with the greatest vigour, were sufficiently broad so as to be acceptable to any opponent of the occupation, if he did not know they came from the communists and that they thereby ‘concealed’ their ‘ultimate aims’. The editorial board of *Borba* complied with this broadness. Even [Radovan] Zogović – as with the ‘necessary stage’. The extent and persistence of the uprising in Krajina, Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun and Banija, which allowed us communists to put together an army imbued with our ideas and guided by our Party – all of this indubitably told us communists that we settle all matters of the revolution through the struggle against the occupiers. This came to the fore quite sharply and irrevocably in Tito’s article “The struggle against the occupier, the first and most vital task” (*Proleter*, December 1942): the revolution thereby seemed to conceal itself, having found its concrete life’s path”.<sup>30</sup>

Among the council members of AVNOJ were several persons from the former parliamentary milieu, and this was emphasized to the same extent that the overall membership of this notably communist deliberative body was in turn concealed. For example: Ivan Ribar was the “former chairman of the constitutional assembly”; Nuriya Pozderac was “a former senator from Cazin, a member of the Main Committee of the JMO [Yugoslav Muslim Organization]; Florijan Sučić was the “former chairman of the HSS City Organization from Livno”. The names of communists were accompanied by additional information, so that, for example, Vladimir Bakarić was described as “a law clerk from Zagreb, the political commissar of the NOV and PO for Croatia”, while Rodoljub Čolaković was described as “a journalist from Bijeljina, a member of the Chiefs of Staff of the NOV and PO for Bosnia-Herzegovina”. The members of the AVNOJ included four Orthodox priests, of whom two were the

<sup>29</sup> M. Pijade, “Antifašističko veće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije i komunističkpartija”, *Proleter*: 826-829.

<sup>30</sup> M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 226.

religious liaisons to the proletarian brigades.<sup>31</sup> This was also repeated at the second session of the AVNOJ in Jajce.<sup>32</sup> This sent the message that the AVNOJ was not a self-appointed communist assembly, but rather a gathering of different political options and even representatives of religious communities, with the intent of demonstrating that the communists were not opposed to religion. The communists continued such practices even later. When the Government of the People's Republic of Croatia was proclaimed in 1945, the official biographies of its members did not mention their membership in the KPJ, as opposed to the members of the pre-war civic parties. For example, the biography of Prime Minister Vladimir Bakarić mentions membership in unnamed progressive student and antifascist organizations, as well as membership in the Steering Committee for the establishment of the Working People's Party, while Deputy Prime Minister Franjo Gaži's biography emphasizes his membership in the HSS.<sup>33</sup> Even after the war and up to 1948, the communists obscured their membership in the KPJ, except in Slovenia, where it began to be highlighted in 1946, so that Kardelj responded and warned "the Slovenian leadership that the Party was being overly emphasized in public and that this was politically detrimental".<sup>34</sup>

In Jajce on 29 November 1943, thus exactly one year later, the communists did what they had planned to do in Bihać. They proclaimed the AVNOJ the supreme legislative and executive representative body of Yugoslavia, at which the National Committee of Yugoslavia's Liberation was established to function as the governing cabinet. The right of the Yugoslav government-in-exile to present itself as the Yugoslav government was contested, as were the international treaties that it had signed, which had to be reviewed with the aim of either rescinding or re-negotiating them. It was announced that Yugoslavia would be built on the "democratic federal principle as a state community of equal nations". The preamble to the Declaration explained that a new balance of political forces had been created in the people's liberation struggle "and that this new balance of power had to be appropriately expressed in its administration and state leadership".<sup>35</sup> To the "wider masses of the people" as the communists called the population whose favour they curried, the most attractive was the Decision on the establishment of Yugoslavia on a federal basis, in which this federalism also guaranteed the equality of the "Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins, and the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia,

<sup>31</sup> S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*, pp. 18-19: Proglas AVNOJ-a narodima Jugoslavije od 27. 11. 1942.

<sup>32</sup> *Drugo zasjedanje Antifašističkog vijeća narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, 1945, pp. 47-51.

<sup>33</sup> *Narodna vlada Hrvatske*, 1945, pp. 95-97.

<sup>34</sup> Jera Vodušek Starič, *Kako su komunisti osvojili vlast 1944.-1946.* (Zagreb, 2006), p. 418.

<sup>35</sup> S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*, pp. 109-113: Deklaracija Drugog zasjedanja AVNOJ-a od 29. 11. 1943.

Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina”.<sup>36</sup> The date of this session was observed in Yugoslavia as Republic Day.

Based on the AVNOJ as the umbrella representative body, in 1943 the KPJ initiated the establishment of territorial antifascist councils, thereby creating the pretence of the pledged federalism. In Croatia's case, this was done by some of the AVNOJ councillors. The territorial councils could not be separated from the AVNOJ matrix because they were its regional outposts. Out of all of the territorial representative bodies, it would appear that the ZAVNOH gave the impression of engaging in the most systematic and serious work. The ZAVNOH steering committee was established on 1 March 1943, and its first session was held on 13 June 1943 with the objective of organizing a unified political front of the communist and other parties. In the same year, the ZAVNOH released several resolutions and the message that the king and monarchy should not be counted upon.<sup>37</sup> But it was only at its third session on 9 May 1944 that it issued the fundamental documents that heralded Croatia's federal status in the future Yugoslav federation. These were the decisions which proclaimed the ZAVNOH the supreme legislative and executive representative body and the highest body of state authority in Croatia and which granted approval for the work of Croatia's representatives at the Second Session of AVNOJ.<sup>38</sup> This “approval” was also granted by the remaining territorial assemblies, such as ZAVNOBiH and the AVNO of Serbia.<sup>39</sup>

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen is a document which best illustrates the discrepancy between the wartime promises of the AVNOJ and ZAVNOH and post-war realities.<sup>40</sup> Although the leading Croatian expert on ZAVNOH, Hodimir Sirotković, cited it in multiple instances, he never actually explained the nature of this document's emergence.<sup>41</sup> Since the draft was released in 1943, which was then written in March and April 1944 by Moša Pi-jade, it is apparent that the ZAVNOH received it from the AVNOJ and adapted it to Croatia's specific situation.<sup>42</sup> This particularly pertained to the equality

<sup>36</sup> *Drugo zasjedanje Antifašističkog vijeća narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, 31-32.

<sup>37</sup> N. Kisić Kolanović, *Andrija Hebrang*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>38</sup> *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske: zbornik dokumenata 1944/II* (Zagreb, 1970), pp. 663-665: Odluka o ZAVNOH-u kao vrhovnom zakonodavnom i izvršnom narodnom predstavničkom tijelu i najvišem organu državne vlasti demokratske Hrvatske od 9. 5. 1944.; *Ibid.*, pp. 660-662: Odluka o odobrenju rada predstavnika Hrvatske na Drugom zasjedanju AVNOJ-a od 9. 5. 1944.

<sup>39</sup> S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*, pp. 269-277.

<sup>40</sup> *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske: zbornik dokumenata 1944/II*, pp. 666-667: Deklaracija ZAVNOH-a od 9. 5. 1944. o osnovnim pravima naroda i građana demokratske Hrvatske.

<sup>41</sup> Hodimir Sirotković, *ZAVNOH - Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske: rasprave i dokumenti* (Zagreb, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*, pp. 156-163: Nacrt deklaracije o osnovnim pravima nacija i građana DFJ iz travnja 1944.

of the Croats and Serbs. That this was a draft which was meant to serve as a federal circular can be seen by the fact that a similar document was adopted by the equivalent territorial council for Bosnia-Herzegovina (ZAVNOBiH) in July 1944.<sup>43</sup> According to the draft by Pijade, this declaration, together with the Declaration of the People's Government, was supposed to have the status of a constitution until a formal nation-wide constitution was adopted.<sup>44</sup> During the proclamation of the similar Declaration by the ZAVNOBiH, its chairman Rodoljub Čolaković said that it had "the significance of our Constitution"<sup>45</sup> The post-war accusations levelled by Bakarić against Andrija Hebrang, that "all documents of the Third Session, especially the Declaration, rest on the 'Hebrangist' understanding of parliamentarism, which is why that entire gathering remained 'steeped in civic-liberal convictions'", therefore have no grounds.<sup>46</sup> The editors of a collection of documents on Partisan and communist crimes in Croatia used precisely this Declaration to open their book, because it best illustrates communist pledges in contrast to the reality of what they actually did.<sup>47</sup> This was also an indicator that Bolshevik antifascism, an expression of Stalinism, predominated in Croatia and Yugoslavia.

### Antifascism in the communist interpretation of history

After the war, the KPJ reinforced its position through the People's Front and rapidly cast antifascism aside. The AVNOJ and the territorial antifascist councils became the federal and republic assemblies in 1945. Already in 1946, the USAOJ changed its name to the People's Youth of Yugoslavia. The Antifascist Women's Front ceased functioning in 1953, after which the Federation of Women's Associations of Yugoslavia was formed.<sup>48</sup> In that year, the People's Front was renamed the Federation of the Socialist Working People of Yugoslavia.<sup>49</sup> With this, the process of erasing the role of non-communists from the

<sup>43</sup> *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine: dokumenti 1943-1944.*, Sarajevo, 1968., 233-236: Predlog Deklaracije ZAVNOBiH-a od 1. 7. 1944. o pravima građana Bosne i Hercegovine.

<sup>44</sup> S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*, 147-148: Predlog Moše Pijade od 31. 3. 1944. za davanje inicijative zemaljskim antifašističkim većima za izradu deklaracije o narodnoj vlasti i pravima građana.

<sup>45</sup> *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine: dokumenti 1943-1944.*, 235.

<sup>46</sup> N. Kisić Kolanović, *Andrija Hebrang*, 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> Zdravko Dizdarević et al., ed., *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944.-1946.: dokumenti* (Slavonski Brod, 2005), pp. 33-34.

<sup>48</sup> Vida Tomšić, "Antifašistički front žena", *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (Zagreb, 1955), sv.1, pp. 119-121; Zhitomir Stanković, "Savez omladine Jugoslavije", *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, sv. 7 (Zagreb, 1968), p. 161.

<sup>49</sup> Aleksandar Petković, "Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Jugoslavije", *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, sv. 7, p. 417.

system was completed, and parallel to this, new templates for the interpretation of the past were installed, which were exceptionally important to the KPJ. Nothing was left to chance, particularly in the treatment of topics pertaining to the People's Liberation War. "An unwritten rule was instituted according to which the People's Liberation War and the revolution could only be covered by those who had participated in it. Advice from experts was not accepted", wrote two Serbian historians in 1996.<sup>50</sup>

More recent events, and not just recent history, began to be interpreted on the basis of the postulates from Tito's Political Report delivered at the Fifth Congress of the KPJ held in 1948. Tito's address, as one Serbian historian observed,

"offered a conceptual framework and model for the writing of history. For almost an entire decade, Party 'historians' adhered to 'the Gospel' in which they found all of the necessary 'assessments', 'stances', 'conclusions', inspiration and sources for historical themes and motifs, an authoritative text from which citations were derived and where the most reliable responses were found. The report delivered by Josip Broz also interpreted and explained the past. 'Historians' had only to supplement and elaborate these 'explanations'."<sup>51</sup>

In his report, Tito said that the liberation struggle of the Yugoslav peoples also had a revolutionary character with the objectives of expelling the occupying powers and liberating the country, eradicating domestic traitors and creating an internal order better than that of the former, older Yugoslavia.<sup>52</sup> In this same report, Tito called out the Western allies that insisted upon "some rights of the Western-democratic type" as an attempt to aid the Yugoslav bourgeoisie to provoke civil war and prevent the creation of a new Yugoslavia.<sup>53</sup> This report served as the signpost for interpreting the war as a socialist revolution.<sup>54</sup>

A mass literature began to be generated already in the 1950s which was supposed to describe the dominant communist role in the preceding war. Until 1990, the official term among interpreters of history in the military sphere was people's liberation war or struggle, while interpreters from the civilian sphere used the term revolution. What all of them had in common was that they did not write about antifascism nor did they use the term antifascist struggle. In the picture of the very recent past that was created by Partisan political commissars who were more or less adept at writing, there was no place for the KPJ's

<sup>50</sup> Đorđe Stanković, Ljubodrag Dimić, *Istoriografija pod nadzorom: Prilozi za istoriju istoriografije* (Belgrade, 1996), 1 dio, p. 204.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>52</sup> *V kongres Komunističke partije Jugoslavije: izveštaji i referat* (Belgrade, 1948), pp. 128, 137.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>54</sup> Branko Petranović, *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji (1941-1945)* (Belgrade, 1983), knjiga I, p. 7.



reluctant and misled fellow travellers. The communists did not want to share the credit with others even if they had been antifascists; non-communists were only extras in the great political game in which the KPJ played the main role. Partisan veterans continued the wartime practice of keeping antifascism from joining their ranks either organizationally or institutionally. They were gathered in the Alliance of Associations of Veterans of the People's Liberation War (SUBNOR), an organization which constituted one of the pillars of the system known for its rigid stances and considerable influence on society. The extent to which antifascism was marginalized in post-war communist mythology can be seen in the various editions of the universal encyclopaedia published by the Yugoslav Lexicographic Institute in Zagreb, in which only a general sketch was accorded to the concept, while, for example, in the military encyclopaedia and the general encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia, which covered the war more thoroughly, antifascism did not even merit an entry, and it was always linked to fascism.<sup>55</sup>

Nothing at all was written about antifascism, rather only about organizations tied to the KPJ which had antifascism in their names. The most was written about the AVNOJ and similar bodies of representative authority, primarily by legal experts who set forth from rigidly dictated Party canon.<sup>56</sup> Despite this, during the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, an exhaustive study was never written, rather only occasional anthologies of documents were published, usually released in ten-year intervals by the same authors for the most part.<sup>57</sup> The study by Branko Petranović on the AVNOJ from 1976 was written without the accompanying critical apparatus.<sup>58</sup> At the seminar entitled "AVNOJ and Modernity" held in Sarajevo in November 1983 to mark the fortieth anniversary of the AVNOJ, not a single contribution dealt with antifascism as an ideology, nor did any of their titles even emphasize the term.<sup>59</sup>

Most of the works on the war were "manufactured" by the Military History Institute of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). One of the editors in the Military Publishing and Press Centre of the Yugoslav Army (the direct successor to the former JNA), acknowledged in 1993 that the expertise-based "criticism has

<sup>55</sup> "Antifašizam", *Enciklopedija Leksikografskog zavoda* (Zagreb, MCMLV) sv. 1., p. 174; "Antifašizam", *Opća enciklopedija* (Zagreb, 1974), svezak 1, p. 191.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Vojislav Simović, *AVNOJ – pravno politička studija* (Belgrade, 1958). An overview of the relevant literature written up to that point is also provided in the book. In Croatia on the ZAVNOH in the above-cited collection of works by Hodimir Sirotković.

<sup>57</sup> Moša Pijade, ed., *Prvo i Drugo zasjedanje AVNOJ-a* (Belgrade, 1953); S. Nešović, ed., *Prvo i Drugo zasjedanje AVNOJ-a* (Zagreb, 1963); S. Nešović, *Temelji nove Jugoslavije*; Slobodan Nešović, Branko Petranović, *AVNOJ i revolucija: tematska zbirka dokumenata 1941-1945* (Beograd, 1983).

<sup>58</sup> B. Petranović, *AVNOJ – revolucionarna smena vlasti 1942-1945*.

<sup>59</sup> *AVNOJ i suvremenost: naučnik skup "Odluke AVNOJA – trajna osnova nacionalne ravnopravnosti, bratstva i jedinstva, socijalističkog samoupravnog zajedništva, razvoja i napretka naroda i narodnosti"* (Sarajevo, 1984).



noted” two “general shortcomings in this production: bias in the selection of themes which was reflected in the unequal representation of various historical periods and the non-scholarly character of most works dealing with the history of the 1941-45 period”.<sup>60</sup>

The institutes for the history of the labour movement were of a somewhat higher calibre, as they were slowly becoming civilian and republic counterparts to the JNA's Military History Institute and they gradually began to employ university-educated historians, even though initially they also filled their ranks using the same formula of hiring revolutionary Party cadres. In this regard, the assertion that in Croatia the themes in question began to be researched in scholarly fashion in the early 1960s, and that the preceding experimentation with non-experts had provided only meagre and even negative results, can be accepted.<sup>61</sup> Most of the writing generated in the Institute for the History of the Labour Movement of Croatia dealt with the history of the Communist Party of Croatia (KPH)/KPJ, the people's authorities (AVNOJ and ZAVNOH), mass political organizations in which the emphasis was placed on the youth organization, and the Unified People's Liberation Front, while much less was written about the Antifascist Women's Front. Of the scholarly insights worth mentioning, one may speak of research into the political and military opponents of the KPJ, i.e., the forces of the “counterrevolution” as they were called, of which the HSS was deemed a component.<sup>62</sup> That this was a similar formula for “success” is apparent from historian Rasim Hurem's review of the treatment of the People's Liberation War and revolution in neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1945 to 1982. Besides the People's Liberation Struggle forces, the occupying powers and their collaborators, the role of bourgeois politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina was also touched upon, with the note that very little had been done, or rather that more had been done on “the study of the Ustasha and Chetnik movements as organized expressions of bourgeois politics”.<sup>63</sup>

Civilian historians were increasingly addressing the socialist revolution and, naturally, the KPJ's role therein, such as, for example, Franjo Tuđman's books published in 1963 and 1965.<sup>64</sup> In the 1970s this became the rule.<sup>65</sup> For

<sup>60</sup> Miroslav P. Perišić, *Rat postaje istorija*, “‘Proizvodnja’ knjige kao strateško pitanje”, *Vojska*, Belgrade, 25 Nov. 1993.

<sup>61</sup> Ivo Jelić, “Narodnooslobodilačka borba i socijalistička revolucija u Hrvatskoj, velika tema i zadaća hrvatske historiografije”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* III (1971), no. 2-3, 9-10.

<sup>62</sup> Ivo Jelić, “Istraživanje razdoblja 1941-1945.”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 38 (1982), no. 1: 83-88.

<sup>63</sup> Rasim Hurem, “Naša historiografija o Bosni i Hercegovini 1941-1945.”, *Savjetovanje o historiografiji Bosne i Hercegovine (1945-1982)* (Sarajevo, 1983), pp. 85-113, specifically 108.

<sup>64</sup> Franjo Tuđman, *Stvaranje socijalističke Jugoslavije* (Zagreb, 1960); *Ibid.*, *Okupacija i revolucija: dvije rasprave* (Zagreb, 1963).

<sup>65</sup> At the consultations on historiography in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1945 to 1982, some of the leading authorities for that period faulted Hurem, who presented an overview of historiographic

the jubilee marking thirty years since the outbreak of the uprising, a scholarly seminar was held in Ljubljana in January 1972 on the topic of "The Liberation Struggle of the Peoples of Yugoslavia as a General War and Socialist Yugoslavia". Virtually all relevant civilian and military historians and Party interpreters gathered in the Union of Institutions for the Study of the Recent History of the Nations and Nationalities of Yugoslavia participated in the seminar.<sup>66</sup> One out of the total of 45 works dealt with the topic of antifascism.<sup>67</sup> The members of this same Union marked the thirty year anniversary of "the liberation of Yugoslavia and the victory over fascism" in a gathering held in Belgrade.<sup>68</sup> This clearly communicated the intent that the major social changes brought by the war and the participants in the people's liberation movement, with the exception of the KPJ, were unimportant and almost unworthy of serious study.

It was only during the final decade of Yugoslavia's existence (the 1980s) that more challenging works began to appear which indicated how complex the picture of the war was. When compared to preceding works, it is possible to discern the process of many decades of simplification of that picture. This does not diminish the fact that these works were often politically motivated and served the purposes of inter-republic conflicts, specifically Serbia's push to amend Yugoslav federalism.<sup>69</sup> In them, those political forces with little affinity for the communists but who did not join the fascists or their local puppet regimes were designated as antifascism. In their book *Stranački pluralizam ili monizam* from 1983 [published in English in 1985 as *Party Pluralism or Monism*], Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški accorded considerable attention to civic forces and showed that the KPJ assumed authority by deception.<sup>70</sup> In 1985, Petranović, a trusted Party historian, provided a more complex overview of forces within Yugoslavia and dedicated a chapter to the antifascist forces of civic/liberal origin. He characterized Mihailović's Chetniks as the most significant antifascist factor among the Serbian citizenry. But he did not question the official assessment of their activities. He wrote that the people's liberation struggle was conceived and implemented as an indivisible phenomenon, "con-

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results on this period, for not stressing clearly enough that the People's Liberation War was simultaneously a socialist revolution, with which he did not agree. *Savjetovanje o istoriografiji Bosne i Hercegovine (1945-1982)*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>66</sup> *Oslobodilačka borba naroda Jugoslavije kao opštenarodni rat i socijalistička Jugoslavija* (Belgrade, 1-2, 1977).

<sup>67</sup> Petar Kačavenda, "Stvaranje antifašističkih omladinskih saveza u 1941-1942. godini", *Oslobodilačka borba naroda Jugoslavije kao opšte narodni rat i socijalistička Jugoslavija*, 1: 117-124.

<sup>68</sup> *Narodnooslobodilački rat i socijalistička revolucija u Jugoslaviji u završnoj etapi Drugog svetskog rata* (Belgrade, 1978).

<sup>69</sup> Dušan Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest* (Zagreb, 1999), pp. 696-714, 750-758.

<sup>70</sup> Vojislav Koštunica, Kosta Čavoški, *Stranački pluralizam ili monizam: Društveni pokreti i politički sistem u Jugoslaviji 1944.-1949* (Belgrade, 1983).

taining a trinity of qualities: antifascism, people's liberation and social emancipation, which merged into a unified whole by rejecting artificial, sterile and historically futile divisions of the living in the Comintern".<sup>71</sup> But all of this was overshadowed by the book by historian Veselin Đuretić, who coined the term defeatist antifascism in his 1985 monograph *Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama* [The Allies and the Yugoslav Wartime Drama], which openly rehabilitated the Chetnik movement.<sup>72</sup>

### Antifascism in contemporary Croatian interpretations

During the war from 1990 to 1992, the disappearance of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ) and Yugoslavia itself was accompanied by the disappearance of the main component of the Yugoslav interpretation of the "antifascist" struggle, the socialist revolution, from everyday usage. The JNA, which together with the SKJ was the primary guardian of that revolution's outcome, also disappeared. In Croatia, the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH) changed its name to the Party of Democratic Change in 1990, and then later to the Social Democratic Party, while the SUBNOR changed its name to the Alliance of Antifascist Veterans (SAB) in 1992, and then in 2007 to the Alliance of Antifascist Veterans and Antifascists. The renaming of SUBNOR reflected the realization that legitimacy had to be sought outside of the previous interpretative formulas set forth by the KPJ in 1948. Similar moves were made in other republics of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>73</sup> The surviving communist structures, now with a new, allegedly democratic veneer, found a new legitimacy in the suppressed concept of antifascism which, for 45 years (from 1945 to 1990), had been ignored and marginalized to the glory of the KPJ and its great wartime leader Tito.

<sup>71</sup> B. Petranović, *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji (1941-1945)*, knjiga I, pp. 13, 117-138.

<sup>72</sup> Veselin Đuretić, *Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama* (Belgrade, I-II, 1985).

<sup>73</sup> Until 2006 and the collapse of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the SUBNOR of Yugoslavia existed and functioned in the two republics. In Serbia the SUBNOR continued to function without changing its name. In Montenegro it was reorganized and as of 2006 it functioned as the Alliance of Associations of People's Liberation War Veterans and Antifascists of Montenegro. A part of them immediately separated and operated as the SUBNOR of Montenegro/Yugoslav Option. In Slovenia, the SUBNOR changed its name in 1993 to the Alliance of Associations of Veterans and Participants of the People's Liberation Struggle of Slovenia, while in 2007 it became the Alliance of Associations of Fighters for the Values of the People's Liberation Struggle of Slovenia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are two veterans associations which function separately in the territories of that country's two entities: from the SUBNOR BiH, the Alliance of Antifascists and Veterans of the People's Liberation War in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SABNOR BiH) emerged in 2006 and it functions in the territory of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the remainder of Bosnia's territory, the SUBNOR of the Republic of Srpska has functioned since 1992. In Macedonia, the SUBNOR has continued to function as the Alliance of Veterans of the People's Liberation and Antifascist War of Macedonia.

A new formula for redemptive legitimacy was derived from an aspect of political struggles in Croatia in 1990-1991 and the negation of accusations from Serbia that the Ustasha NDH was being renewed in Croatia. In Croatia during the collapse of Yugoslavia and the search for a new way in the spring of 1990, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won in multiparty elections with a platform of political reconciliation. The HDZ was more of a movement that gathered advocates of the creation of a state than it was a party. It was headed by former communist official and historian, and later dissident, Franjo Tuđman.<sup>74</sup> He had also written the preambular clauses for the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia ratified in December 1990, wherein he stressed the right of the Croats to their state and denied the accusations from Serbia that this was just an attempt to restore the NDH.<sup>75</sup> Tuđman thus became the father of contemporary Croatian "antifascism" which was extracted from Yugoslavism, of which it had been an integral component, and in which the share of the Serbs from Croatia was ignored. Tuđman presented Croatian antifascism as the continuity of Croatian state-building aspirations and a positive feature of contemporary Croatia before the international community.<sup>76</sup> This later led to the unfounded interpretation of antifascism as an ideology based on democracy rather than on a simple negation of fascism from different and opposing worldviews, which also encompassed the dominant Stalinism of the Yugoslav communists.<sup>77</sup>

Even professional historiography in Croatia could not forsake its decades-long political shackles overnight, which was understandable given that its ranks were dominated by Party (KPH/KPJ) researchers and their extended political (AFŽ and USAOJ) and representative (AVNOJ and ZAVNOH) arms.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945.-1991.: od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb, 2006), pp. 590-591.

<sup>75</sup> "Ustav Republike Hrvatske od 22. 12. 1990.", *Narodne novine*, no. 56 of 22 Dec. 1990; Zdenko Radelić, "Odvjetnici prošlosti", *Vijenac*, 31 Mar. 2016: 3.

<sup>76</sup> Nikica Barić, "Antifašistička borba u Drugom svjetskom ratu i političkim interpretacijama hrvatskih predsjednika 1991-2006.", *Revizija prošlosti na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije*, zbornik radova (Sarajevo, 2007), pp. 211-233, specifically 232.

<sup>77</sup> An example is the Charter of the Antifascist League from May 2014 in which it states that antifascism is "founded on tolerance and openness to all others and those who are different and as such it stands in opposition to Nazism/fascism, which grew out of intolerance and hatred, on the exaltation of violence and militarism, on the cult of the leader, the cult of the nation and a deep contempt for modern political ideas and their political systems. It is particularly troubling that attempts are being made to relegate to oblivion, deny or downplay the horrible crimes perpetrated by the Nazi/fascist movements and state formations and the ideologies which formulated and legitimized these crimes". The charter's signatories consisted of associations that declared themselves leftist and which generally minimized the undemocratic nature of communist Yugoslavia. Charter of the Antifascist League of the Republic of Croatia, at <http://www.documenta.hr/assets/files/objave/POVELJA-press-release.pdf> (accessed 11 February 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Most of the labour movement history institutes were renamed history institutes. The Institute for the History of the Labour Movement of Croatia in Zagreb became the Institute of

These researchers initially accepted the new antifascist direction, which was symbolically initiated by the decision made by the Croatian Parliament on 23 March 1991 to specify 22 June as a national holiday called Antifascist Struggle Day.<sup>79</sup> At the proposal of Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, the Croatian Parliament appointed the members of the Committee on Commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Antifascist Coalition Victory in Europe and the World, which resulted in a book of symbolic scholarly value on Croatia's contribution to the victory of the antifascist coalition, which had two editions.<sup>80</sup>

On 24 June 1991, a symposium on the topic of Croatia in 1941 was held in the Institute of Contemporary History to mark the "50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the antifascist struggle".<sup>81</sup> This was a continuation of the established practice of commemorating the 1941 uprising and the socialist revolution every decade. In the introductory remarks, the writer of the Croatian Communist Party's history, Ivan Jelić, interpreted the passivity of the HSS and its gradual adoption of a stance and active involvement as an aspect of antifascist engagement. Given the interpretations of only a decade prior, this was an astounding departure. He interpreted the communist uprising as an armed antifascist struggle, which included a comment on the departure of Sisak-based communists into the woods. As a whole, his interpretation remained close to earlier interpretations while adopting the newly-proclaimed antifascism (in lieu of the people's liberation struggle) and the incorporation of new rhetorical devices which were then just being formed. Even so, along with the customary assertions of attempts to diverge from the Comintern, he acknowledged that it was in fact the Comintern which insisted on the antifascist struggle rather than socialist revolution.<sup>82</sup> Gordana Vlačić spoke the most cogently about antifascism; for her, the communist people's front concept of antifascism was not rooted on democratic grounds, rather it served the struggle for establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>83</sup> Drago Roksandić noted that much had been written about fascism and antifascism in Croatia in 1941, "but often it is

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Contemporary History in 1990, and then the Croatian Institute of History in 1996. The Institute of Contemporary History in Belgrade emerged from the Historical Scholarship Department of the Institute of Social Science and the Department of Labour Movement History of the Institute for the Study of the Labour Movement. The Institute for the history of the Labour Movement of Serbia in Belgrade became the Institute for the Recent History of Serbia. The Institute for the History of the Labour Movement in Ljubljana became the Institute of Contemporary History. The basic information on the history of these institutes can be found on their respective websites.

<sup>79</sup> "Zakon o blagdanima i neradnim danima u Republici Hrvatskoj od 23. 3 1991.", *Narodne novine*, no. 14 of 25 Mar. 1991.

<sup>80</sup> *Doprinos Hrvatske pobjedi antifašističke koalicije*, Drugo i dopunjeno izdanje (Zagreb 1995). The text was written by Zdravko Dizdar and Milivoj Kujundžić.

<sup>81</sup> "Hrvatska 1941. Rasprava u povodu 50.obljetnicepočetkaantifašističkeborbe", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 23 (1991), no. 1-3: 57-104.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: 60, 62-64, 68.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 87-89.

entirely unclear as to which these terms imply".<sup>84</sup> In a topical issue of *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* [the Institute's contemporary history journal] from 1995 on the Second World War, Nada Kisić-Kolanović expressed the opinion that a reliable evaluation of the complex character of the Croatian Partisan movement would require that it "not be entirely equated with the communist ideology". She asserted that Croatia had confirmed its national identity through its participation in the antifascist movement and that "the emphasis should not be placed on the view that antifascism was exclusively a communist enterprise; the emphasis should be placed on its specific historical content and significance".<sup>85</sup> In 1996, the book *Vojska antifašističke Hrvatske* [The Army of Antifascist Croatia] was published, which dealt with the People's Liberation Army of Croatia (NOVH), heralding a temporary trend to wrap Partisan units in "antifascism" which was not actually the case.<sup>86</sup>

An indicator of just how much the standpoint from which World War II in Croatia's territory was researched after 1990 is a comparison of two scholarly seminars held in 1985 and 2005 on the topic of 1945. Both were held at the same address in Zagreb, first called the Institute for the History of the Labour Movement of Croatia and then the Croatian Institute of History. While in 1985 the emphasis was placed on the liberation of Croatia as a part of Yugoslavia, in 2005 the complexity of that year in Croatia was underscored because of the change in regimes and the related overall research themes. At the seminar in 1985, only the text by Luciano Giuricino on the "Contribution of Italian antifascists of Istria and Rijeka in Croatia's liberation" constituted a departure from the general theme, even if it was also firmly incorporated into Party history. The remaining citations of antifascism were in the context of the standard articles on mass organizations which were led and guided by the KPJ: AVNOJ, ZAVNOH, AFŽ and USAOJ.<sup>87</sup> The seminar in 2005 had a more complex tone, and featured two papers tied to the term antifascism, one by Drago Roksandić ("Memory and the Culture of Historical Thought: the Legacy of Croatian Antifascism, 1945-2005") and the other by Darko Dukovski ("The Ideological Reconstruction of Croatian Antifascism: the Example of Istria"). Since Istria's antifascism was never in doubt, only Roksandić's text on Croatian antifascism was a novelty.<sup>88</sup> With this, professional historiography was virtually exhausted. A step forward will not be possible without a reinterpretation and unrestricted research into the history of the KPJ, which made the most use of the term and was the main antifascist force during the war. Noteworthy is the booklet published by Gordana Vlačić in 2005 about the Bolshevik antifascism of the

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.: 94-95.

<sup>85</sup> Nada Kisić-Kolanović, "Proturječnosti hrvatskoga partizanskog pokreta", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 27 (1995), no. 3: 425-426, 431.

<sup>86</sup> Branko Dubravica, *Vojska antifašističke Hrvatske (1941-1945)* (Zagreb, 1996).

<sup>87</sup> *Oslobođenje Hrvatske 1945. godine*, zbornik (Zagreb, 1986).

<sup>88</sup> *1945. – razdjelnica hrvatske povijesti*, zbornik (Zagreb, 2006).



Comintern from 1919 to 1934 as a European phenomenon, but without any reference to its influence in Croatia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.<sup>89</sup>

Up to the present, the largest contribution to the nature of antifascism in Croatia (and Yugoslavia) has been made by scholars in other fields. Antifascism was covered at the round table debate on 'Controversies over Antifascism' hosted by the Jewish Community in Zagreb in 1995, which, together with the symposium entitled "From Anti-Semitism to the Holocaust", marked the fiftieth anniversary of the "victory of the antifascist coalition, and the defeat of Nazism, Fascism and the Ustasha". The discussions by political scientists and philosophers at the round table were a major departure in comparison to existing interpretations because of the until-then inconceivable indication of how complex wartime antifascism in Croatia was and how simplified post-war interpretations thereof were.<sup>90</sup> It is also worthwhile to note the recently published anthology *(Anti)fašizam u prošlosti i sadašnjosti* [(Anti)fascism in the Past and Present] which merged the traditional notion of war which had been "modernized" by the ambiguous concept of antifascism and a pair of works which frankly contradicted this primary notion because, although indistinct, they underscore how much the problem is simplified and politically motivated by the SAB.<sup>91</sup>

Over the past several years, few works in the Croatian space touched upon topics that had some relationship to antifascism. For example, on the seventieth anniversary of the Second Session of AVNOJ, an "international scholarly and professional symposium" was held in the town of Jajce under the title "550 years from the Fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia and the Suffering of Croats in the Second World War and Post-war Period", at which six papers dealt with the AVNOJ, generally within the realm of current politics.<sup>92</sup>

A special place in the ideological constructs of antifascism is held by the SAB(A) and its publications, and those publications associated with it. Such publications generally maintained the terms NOV and PO, which is proper since this is what contemporaries called their forces.<sup>93</sup> A synthesis by Nikola Anić on the NOVH was published in 2005 and its title is not entirely clear.<sup>94</sup> But in it there is virtually no trace of the revolution and the role of the KPJ (and KPH) which had been written about for decades. For example, in the foreword

<sup>89</sup> G. Vlajčić, *Boljševički antifašizam*, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> *Antisemitizam, holokaust, antifašizam* (Zagreb: Židovska općina, 1996), pp. 260-378.

<sup>91</sup> *(Anti)fašizam u prošlosti i sadašnjosti*, Zbornik radova, (Pula, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> *550. godina od pada Bosne i stradanja Hrvata u II. svjetskom ratu i poraću, zbornik radova* (Nova Bila, 2014). Something new was only provided by the work by Vladimir Šumanović, "Ivan Krajačić Stevo i (Drugo) zasjedanje AVNOJ-a u Jajcu", pp. 152-170.

<sup>93</sup> For example, Vladimir Hlaić, *34. udarna divizija NOV i PO Hrvatske* (Zagreb, 2002).

<sup>94</sup> Nikola Anić, *Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Hrvatske: 1941.-1945.* (Zagreb, 2005). On its covers it bears the title: *Antifašistička Hrvatska: narodnooslobodilačka vojska i partizanski odredi Hrvatske 1941.-1945.*



to the monograph on the 8<sup>th</sup> Dalmatian Corps of the NOVH from 2004, besides the customary ode to the glory of Tito there is also an assertion on the historical significance of the 8<sup>th</sup> Corps:

“...which was the first and only one in the recent history of the Croatian nation to liberate and return to the mother country its Adriatic coast and sea, where the first Croats arrived in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. The modern Republic of Croatia, precisely thanks first and foremost to the 8<sup>th</sup> Dalmatian Corps, obtained its seashore and sea from Savudrija in Istria to Boka Kotorska. The Dalmatian division of the 8<sup>th</sup> Corps in the Second World War not only liberated this Croatian territory, for in the first years after the Second World War, these roughly 25,000 Croats from Dalmatia secured the western borders of the Republic of Croatia from new conquerors”<sup>95</sup>

Anić was also one of the authors of the general overview of the NOVJ from 1982, in which the contribution of the KPJ and SKOJ were naturally covered.<sup>96</sup> Just a superficial comparison of these two books shows that the successors to the SUBNOR in Croatia minimized the revolution, the KPJ and Yugoslavia, which were the key features of the antifascist forces during the war. In Croatia after 2000, a political confrontation was waged by allegedly reformed communists against the concept of Tuđman's reconciliation, from which antifascism was set aside and transformed into dogma. It was claimed that without the ZAVNOH and the communists there would be no Croatia. Antifascism was propagated, while the socialist revolution was ignored. In the field of scholarship, since 2000 there has not been any noteworthy works, whether affirmative or not, on the communists in the war.

In the end, it may be concluded that from 1990 to the present, a very small step in research into antifascist exponents has been made. To formulate the matter in the simplest terms, progress was made in the sense that politician Vlatko Maček is no longer considered an occupation collaborator or fascist, and that the HSS is no longer considered a counter-revolutionary party and fascist accomplice.

## Conclusion

From 1945 to 1990, the history of the NOB or NOR was a strategic issue for the SKJ (and SKH) and it was interpreted as a socialist revolution. Due to political considerations, wartime antifascism lay outside of the interest of scholars and the hagiographers of the Partisan movement and it was entirely

<sup>95</sup> Nikola Anić, *Povijest Osmog korpusa Narodnooslobodilačke vojske Hrvatske 1943.-1945.* (Split, 2004), pp. 5-6.

<sup>96</sup> Nikola Anić, Sekula Joksimović, Mirko Gutić, *Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije, Pregled razvoja oružanih snaga narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta 1941-1945.* (Belgrade, 1982).

ignored. Since the fall of communism and 1991, this was no longer the case, and antifascism is today a frequent topic for political reasons. The new era has formally signified a different approach to historiography which had an opportunity to be freed from political shackles and the proponents for whose political needs history was interpreted. A new interpretation of the character and results of the Second World War in this direction is being attempted. The difference was nonetheless essential. Until 1990 there was a genuine industry of the NOB, while after 1990, and not only in Croatia, there have been almost no books worth mentioning in which the topic is the role of the KPJ and its military and political organization in the revolutionary war.

Historical antifascism served the communists to exploit the “broad masses of the people” to impose the yoke of the proletarian revolution on them, while contemporary “antifascism” serves their direct and ideological heirs to prevent any confrontation with communist crimes and the undemocratic character of Yugoslavia. Deliberations on it are in the service of current politics and they fill the pages of the press and online portals. The primary advocates avoid putting forth their standpoints in scholarly journals. The reason is because if they pass peer review, which should be doubted, they may provoke a response from scholars and because on web-portals they are writing for like-thinkers for whom antifascism is dogma rather than a research problem.<sup>97</sup> As long as antifascism remains in the sphere of day-to-day politics, it will be impossible to make any historiographic progress in researching it.

## **Von dem Volksbefreiungskrieg und der sozialistischen Revolution bis zum antifaschistischen Kampf**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Das Thema der Arbeit ist Behandlung des Kriegsantifaschismus in kroatischer (und bis 1990 jugoslawischer) Geschichtsschreibung. Der Begriff Antifaschismus wurde vor dem Beginn des Zweiten Weltkrieges von der Kommunistischen Partei Jugoslawiens (KPJ) nach den Richtlinien der Kommunistischen Internationale inauguriert. Der KPJ gelang es, dank der praktischen Anwendung des Antifaschismus im Zweiten Weltkrieg, die Macht zu ergrei-

<sup>97</sup> For example, the texts in the weekly of the Serbian National Council published in May 2014 and posted on the web-portal of the Network of Antifascist Women of Zagreb. Link: <http://maz.hr/index.php/tekstovi/vijesti/22-mirna-jasic-zavnoh-70-godina> (accessed on 10 February 2016). Cf. the same section on the web-portal of Documente – Centra za suočavanje s prošlošću <http://www.documenta.hr/hr/tre%C4%87e-zasjedanje-zavnoh-a-juraj-hr%C5%BEenjak.html> (accessed on 10 February 2016).

fen und Jugoslawien zu restaurieren. Der Antifaschismus wurde nach dem Kriegsende gänzlich ignoriert und der Krieg wurde ausschließlich als Volksbefreiungskampf und sozialistische Revolution gedeutet. Nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus und nach dem Zerfall Jugoslawiens 1990-1992 wurde der Begriff Antifaschismus in den öffentlichen Gebrauch wiedereingeführt. Von den mit der ehemaligen regierenden kommunistischen Elite (Mitglieder des Bundes der Kommunisten Jugoslawiens und Partisanen-Kriegsveteranen) verbundenen Strukturen wird der Antifaschismus als demokratische Ideologie auferlegt, die man nicht in Frage stellen dürfte, sondern rückhaltlos annehmen müsste. Die Kommunisten bedienten sich des geschichtlichen Antifaschismus und nützten die Nicht-Kommunisten aus, um die Macht zu ergreifen, und ihre direkten und ideologischen Nachfolger bedienten sich des zeitgemäßen „Antifaschismus“, um die Aufarbeitung der kommunistischen Verbrechen und des nicht demokratischen Charakters des sozialistischen Jugoslawiens unmöglich zu machen.

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